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Hepatitis C

InfoBeagle Trivia: Around 85% of those with acute hepatitis C go on to develop chronic hepatitis C.

Manage Hepatitis C VirusLower Hepatitis C viral count
without damage to your body**Causes Of Hepatitis C**Learn to Manage Your Symptoms.
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From 14 Search Engines in 1**Defeat Hepatitis C**All natural, drug-free alternative.
Overcome Hep C without side
effects

Hepatitis C is an infectious liver disease caused by the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV). The virus attacks the liver and causes chronic inflammation that interferes with normal liver function. Hepatitis C can over time lead to severe damage to the liver including cirrhosis and may be complicated by liver cancer.

Hepatitis C is spread by direct blood contact. Most commonly it is spread by sharing needles, cotton, spoons, and other items used to share drugs. It can also be spread by sexual contact, but the risk is low. Health care workers who handle needles are also at risk of potentially contracting the virus.

The symptoms of Hepatitis C are very mild and can go unnoticed for years until the liver is already damaged. When symptoms do appear, it is normally difficult to gain effective treatment. There are however medicines and effective home treatments that can reduce the symptoms. If you are in one of the risk groups and suspect you have been infected, you should consult your doctor as soon as possible.

Highlighted Hepatitis C Links:**Ads by Google**

[Triumph Over Hepatitis C : An Alternative Medicine Solution](#) - Top Rated book from Amazon.com

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National Center for Infectious Diseases

Viral Hepatitis C

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Fact Sheet

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SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

80% of persons have no signs or symptoms.

- jaundice
- fatigue
- dark urine
- abdominal pain
- loss of appetite
- nausea

CAUSE

- Hepatitis C virus (HCV)

LONG-TERM EFFECTS

- Chronic infection: 55%-85% of infected persons
- Chronic liver disease: 70% of chronically infected persons
- Deaths from chronic liver disease: 1%-5% of infected persons may die
- Leading indication for liver transplant
- Occurs when blood from an infected person enters the body of a person who is not infected.
- HCV is spread through sharing needles or "works" when "shooting" drugs, through needlesticks or sharps exposures on the job, or from an infected mother to her baby during birth.

TRANSMISSION

Recommendations for testing based on risk for HCV infection

Persons at risk for HCV infection might also be at risk for infection with hepatitis B virus (HBV) or HIV.

Recommendations for Testing Based on Risk for HCV Infection

PERSONS	RISK OF INFECTION	TESTING RECOMMENDED?
Injecting drug users	High	Yes
Recipients of clotting factors made before 1987	High	Yes
Hemodialysis patients	Intermediate	Yes
Recipients of blood and/or solid organs before 1992	Intermediate	Yes

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People with undiagnosed liver problems	Intermediate	Yes
Infants born to infected mothers	Intermediate	After 12-18 mos. old
Healthcare/public safety workers	Low	Only after known exposure
People having sex with multiple partners	Low	No*
People having sex with an infected steady partner	Low	No*

*Anyone who wants to get tested should ask their doctor.

PREVENTION

- There is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C.
- Do not shoot drugs; if you shoot drugs, stop and get into a treatment program; if you can't stop, never share needles, syringes, water, or "works", and get vaccinated against hepatitis A & B.
- Do not share personal care items that might have blood on them (razors, toothbrushes).
- If you are a health care or public safety worker, always follow routine barrier precautions and safely handle needles and other sharps; get vaccinated against hepatitis B.
- Consider the risks if you are thinking about getting a tattoo or body piercing. You might get infected if the tools have someone else's blood on them or if the artist or piercer does not follow good health practices.
- HCV can be spread by sex, but this is rare. If you are having sex with more than one steady sex partner, use latex condoms* correctly and every time to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. You should also get vaccinated against hepatitis B.
- If you are HCV positive, do not donate blood, organs, or tissue.

TREATMENT & MEDICAL MANAGEMENT

AASLD Practice Guideline: Diagnosis, Management, and Treatment of Hepatitis C

- HCV positive persons should be evaluated by their doctor for liver disease.
- Interferon and ribavirin are two drugs licensed for the treatment of persons with chronic hepatitis C.
- Interferon can be taken alone or in combination with ribavirin. Combination therapy, using pegylated interferon and ribavirin, is currently the treatment of choice.
- Combination therapy can get rid of the virus in

STATISTICS & TRENDS

- up to 5 out of 10 persons for genotype 1 and in up to 8 out of 10 persons for genotype 2 and 3.
- Drinking alcohol can make your liver disease worse.
- Number of new infections per year has declined from an average of 240,000 in the 1980s to about 30,000 in 2003.
- Most infections are due to illegal injection drug use.
- Transfusion-associated cases occurred prior to blood donor screening; now occurs in less than one per 2 million transfused units of blood.
- Estimated 3.9 million (1.8%) Americans have been infected with HCV, of whom 2.7 million are chronically infected.
- The risk for perinatal HCV transmission is about 4%
- If coinfecting with HIV the risk for perinatal infection is about 19%

* The efficacy of latex condoms in preventing infection with HCV is unknown, but their proper use may reduce transmission.



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Considering Treatment

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Interferon alone or in combination with a drug called COPEGUS is often used to treat hepatitis C.

Interferon is a protein, and it's no stranger to the human body. In fact, your body is constantly making interferon, and makes even more when it tries to fight off an intruder, such as a virus. You've experienced this if you've ever had the flu. When you have the flu, your body makes extra interferon to defeat the virus that's causing the illness. It's this extra interferon that also causes symptoms like fever, nausea and fatigue.

[Learn more about interferon.](#)

To make sure they have enough interferon, some people with hepatitis C need to inject extra interferon into their bodies to help fight the virus. While the interferon that's used for injection is slightly different from the kind your body makes, **it helps the body defeat the virus in two ways:**

- First, interferon attaches to healthy cells and helps them defend themselves against viruses.
- Second, the medication helps the immune system to stop the virus from multiplying.

Interferon also helps the body get rid of infected cells while preventing healthy cells from being infected.

Alpha interferons have been known to cause severe side effects including new or worsening mental health problems such as depression, trouble breathing, chest pain, high fever or worsening of psoriasis. These disorders generally resolve after stopping therapy.

What else can I do?

You may want to make lifestyle changes in addition to taking your medication. Eating healthy and getting exercise can help *you to fight hepatitis C—and to maintain your overall health.* Many patients are asked to limit or stop drinking alcohol.

Your doctor and nurse may have additional suggestions for keeping yourself as healthy as possible—and you should *always talk to your doctor before making any lifestyle changes on your own.* For more ideas on healthy living, [click here](#).

Is there more than one type of interferon?

There are several types of interferons used to treat hepatitis C including alpha interferon and pegylated alpha interferon. *Usually, alpha interferons are taken along with a drug called COPEGUS.* Be sure to talk with your doctor about these options to help determine which therapy option is right for you.

Alpha interferons have been known to cause new or worsening mental health problems such as depression or suicidal behavior (including thoughts about suicide and suicidal attempts); trouble breathing, chest pain, change in your vision, unusual bleeding or



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(1-877-734-2797) to enroll in our
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Get news and information about
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COPEGUS
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questions about PEGASYS.

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bruising, high fever, or worsening psoriasis. Other side effects associated with alpha interferons include headache, fatigue, fever, nausea, muscle pain, and sleeplessness. These disorders generally resolve after stopping therapy.

these side effects could be worse than the "disease itself."

Remember, there is no way to determine exactly how alpha interferon may affect you before you take it. So, be sure to talk with your doctor or nurse if you have concerns about these medications. Your doctor or nurse will also help you understand what you can expect from therapy, as well as how to deal with some of the side effects that may occur.

How often do I have to take interferon?

This depends on the type of interferon your doctor prescribes. Alpha interferon must be injected 3 times a week. However, pegylated alpha interferons—which use an advanced technology—are only dosed once a week.

The usual length of treatment for hepatitis C is 24 to 48 weeks (exact length of therapy will be determined by your doctor, and may be based on your hepatitis C genotype).

What are the goals for treating hepatitis C?

The main goal of therapy is to achieve what's called a sustained virologic response.

A **virologic response** is the most common way of looking at hepatitis C treatment success. To measure virologic response, doctors use a blood test to measure how much hepatitis C virus is in the blood. The best virologic response would be a "sustained virologic response," which simply means that the virus can't be seen in your blood 6 months or more after completing hepatitis C therapy.

Another way to see if hepatitis C therapy has helped is to look at histologic response to see if liver inflammation has gone down.

What role does ribavirin play in treating hepatitis C?

Ribavirin is a medication that's often used with alpha interferons to help stop the hepatitis C virus from multiplying. Although ribavirin cannot fight hepatitis C on its own, studies have shown that it does help alpha interferons work better. In fact, in PEGASYS clinical studies, more patients achieved a sustained virologic response with PEGASYS in combination with COPEGUS than with PEGASYS alone.

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Ribavirin is a tablet; so although you won't need to inject it, you'll need to take several tablets every day in addition to your alpha-interferon therapy.

Since it's possible that you could experience side effects while taking COPEGUS (and/or alpha interferon), **your doctor can talk with you about any concerns you may have.**

Ribavirin may cause birth defects and/or death of the unborn child. If you are prescribed ribavirin, extreme care must be taken to avoid pregnancy in female patients and in female partners of male patients. Ribavirin has also been associated with a blood disorder called anemia, which may result in a worsening of heart disease.

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How do I take interferon and ribavirin?